



Committee on Homeland Security

Democrats
Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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CONGRESSMAN THOMPSON CALLS FOR HEARINGS ON TERRORIST USE OF STOLEN PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM CHOICEPOINT AND BANK OF AMERICA

Washington, D.C.---Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Homeland Security, sent the attached letter to Rep. Christopher Cox (R-CA), Chairman of the Committee, requesting hearings be held on the terrorism risk created by the recent theft of personal records from ChoicePoint and Bank of America.

ChoicePoint's database has 19 billion public records and includes motor vehicle registrations, license and deed transfers, military records, names, addresses and Social Security numbers. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. consumers are vulnerable to identity theft as a result of this breach of security. Yesterday it was reported that ChoicePoint's database was compromised in a similar manner in 2002.

Bank of America lost its computer tapes containing account information on 1.2 million federal employee credit cards, including those of large numbers of Pentagon employees and several United States Senators. According to public reports, the tapes were likely stolen off a commercial plane by baggage handlers.

Representative Thompson stated: "There is little to stop Al Qaeda from using known vulnerabilities to break into ChoicePoint's databases or to prevent terrorists from stealing critical records off of commercial airplanes. We cannot give terrorists the opportunity to use our citizens' personal records to enter the United States, finance their next attack, or hide their identities while preparing to harm America. Congress must examine the security of commercial databases, as well as the handling of the information contained in them, and work with the private sector to ensure they are secure."

In a separate series of letters issued today, Representative Thompson joined with several other prominent Democrats in the House and Senate to ask the Department of Homeland Security and the Government Accounting Office to investigate the terrorism risk posed by ChoicePoint and similar information brokers.

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